



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 4, 2004

Contact: Jack Miller (858)694-3595

MORE COUNTY BIRDS TEST POSITIVE FOR WEST NILE VIRUS *Virus Found In New Area of The County*

County Vector Control officials announced today that four more dead birds tested positive for West Nile virus in San Diego County. The dead birds were found in Vista, Fallbrook, Escondido and Rancho Penasquitos.

“The testing of dead birds is a key surveillance tool in our efforts to detect the virus in the county. We have had tremendous support from the public who continues to be the eyes and ears for Vector Control,” stated Gary Erbeck, Director of Environmental Health.

At this time we are only testing corvids, which includes crows, ravens and jays; and raptors, including hawks, owls, and falcons. These types of birds have the highest mortality rate from the virus. We are asking the public to report dead birds only if they meet the following criteria: they have been dead for less than 24 hours; do not have a foul odor; are not covered with ants or flies; are not stiff; and if their bodies are intact and have not been hit by a car, shot, or killed by animals. Placing a bag of ice over the bird will help to preserve it until Vector staff can collect the specimen for testing. While you cannot get West Nile virus from dead birds, picking up the bird with bare hands is not recommended. Wear disposable gloves if you must handle the bird.

Vector Control will continue to collect and test dead birds as long as the information is helpful in determining the threat level of the virus in a given area. It is important to note that once West Nile virus has become well established in an area of the county, dead bird testing may no longer provide any useful information for that area.

To report dead birds or mosquito breeding areas please call the County of San Diego Vector Control at 888-551-INFO.

You can protect yourself from the virus by: staying inside at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active; wearing long sleeves and pants when outdoors; and by using an insect repellent containing DEET when you must be outdoors. Keep screens on doors and windows and make sure they are in good repair. For more information about the West Nile virus, call the County's West Nile virus information line at 1-888-551-INFO (4636) or visit the official County West Nile virus website at www.SDFightTheBite.com.

###